

Lehenkari Agirre Center

Introduction

The *Lehendakari Agirre Center* (LAC) is a new collaborative project from various University and Policy Research Centers, including Columbia University and George Mason University, seeking the creation of a think tank focused on the international projection of the Basque People and its extraordinary efforts towards sustainable human development.

The Centre aims to become a referential institution offering the Basque experience as a successful model of sustainable human development to be shared with the international community.

The LAC is named after the first democratically elected president of the Basque Country, Jose Antonio Agirre, who was a professor at Columbia University and thus the center will be a symbol of his legacy both in the United States and the Basque Country.

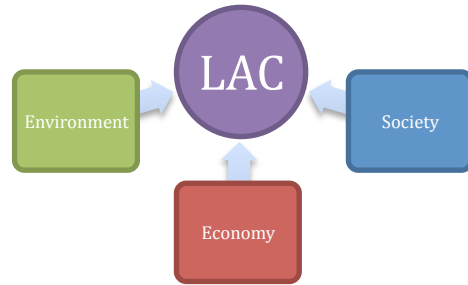
The LAC story

In the late 1970s, the Basque Country was emerging from a period of forty years of dictatorship in Spain that had repressed all expressions of Basque culture. At the time the Basque Country was suffering a major economic crisis, with unemployment rates above 30% and its international image directly associated with terrorist violence. Now that ETA has announced an end to its violent actions, the Basque Country should use this opportunity to achieve a lasting peace.

Despite ETA's violence, Basque People have lead the international rankings of health, education and income per capita. Furthermore, Today Basque corporations are present worldwide and Basque culture is associated with modernity.

The LAC will study and project to the world the strategic decisions that have made this transformation possible and share with other nation and regions wishing to respond similar challenges in innovative ways.

Dr. Juan Jose Ibarretxe, the person who led the Basque government for 10 years in which these decisions were made and who has made an academic contribution on the subject in a number of universities in the US, will chair the LAC.



The LAC scope

The scope of the center will be to design, manage, develop and participate in multidisciplinary studies and research projects in the US, the Basque Country and throughout the world.

The center will be located at the Columbia University campus in New York City, George Mason University in Washington DC and in the Basque Country, with the possibility of reaching agreements with other regions of the world.

Program objectives

- To study and reflect upon the major issues that will affect the Basque Country in the future, offering the best social and institutional response in order to achieve and maintain a sustainable human development.
- To build a network with prestigious universities, university departments and institutions worldwide that specialize in fields of research related to the objectives of this center, i.e. economic policy, sustainable development, conflict resolution, self-government, peace building, environment, etc.
- To create the “Agirre Program” a network of influential people, both in the Basque Country and internationally, interested in the Basque model for sustainable development and who want to participate in the implementation of this model in international forums.
- To create a platform to identify opportunities, generate ideas and concepts for discussion and debate, stimulating innovation and constant change in society and facilitating the country's openness to new realities and challenges of a globalized society.
- To collaborate and cooperate with countries and regions, both industrialized and developing, around the world in order to explore local and global responses to future challenges always taking sustainability as a model for development.

The LAC Financing Model

The LAC must have a strong and independent support that will not be directly linked to governments or political parties, in order to ensure its independence and non-partisan approach in the short and long term.

The funding will come through companies and institutions interested in the LAC and its program. In return they will be members of an internationally recognized think tank and research Center. They will participate in the development of the Basque model, contribute to it and represent it in international forums.

“This fascinating Basque case study demonstrates the power of a holistic approach to development, one that simultaneously and creatively engages with economic, social, political, environmental and cultural elements and the potential for them to be aligned to facilitate self-reinforcing positive change.”

- Dr. Jacqueline Klopp, **Columbia University**

“The Basque Case offers a model for 21st Century development, a merger of Keynesian and Schumpeterian approaches; enhanced social change and entrepreneurship.”

- Diogo Vasconcelos, **Founding Chair of the Social Innovation Exchange**



Jose Antonio Agirre



Juan Jose Ibarretxe

